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**Inventory
for
Manuscript Collection
MS-469**

S. J. Cooper and Son Papers
Inclusive dates 1905-1908

by
Nathan R. Lipfert

April 2016

Eight Folders
Accession # 2006.087.01

A PART OF THE CAPTAIN W. J. LEWIS PARKER BEQUEST

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Abstract

S. J. Cooper & Son

Papers, 1905 - 1908

Eight folders

Maritime merchants and shipowners at Sharptown (MD).

Papers, including correspondence, trip statements, invoices and receipts, bills of lading, an insurance policy, and a statement of general average, documenting the operation of the three-masted schooners *Alice P. Turners* and *Joseph P. Cooper* in coastwise trades and the West Indies trade.

Bequeathed by Capt. W. J. Lewis Parker in 2006.

MS-469; Accession # 2006.087.01

Finding aid in repository; folder level control.

Added entries—people

Beauchamp, John F., *Captain*

Bonsall, J. L., *Captain*

Cooper, Joseph P.

Cooper, Samuel J.

Williams, S. W., *Captain*

Added entries—corporate bodies (including vessels)

Alice P. Turner (Three mast schooner)

Harry Landell (Three mast schooner)

Joseph P. Cooper (Three mast schooner)

Added entries—places

Sharptown (MD)

Added entries—key terms

Coastwise shipping

Insurance

Schooners

West Indies trade

Acquisition

These papers of S. J. Cooper & Son were bequeathed to Maine Maritime Museum from the estate of Capt. W. J. Lewis Parker in November and December 2006.

Provenance

Capt. Parker was an extremely knowledgeable collector and an expert on North American schooners. He picked up many parts of his collection of maritime papers by purchase from dealers, auctions, or estate sales, and by gifts from relatives of maritime figures. We have found no documentation of how he acquired this particular group of manuscripts. Although there is no

obvious connection to Maine, we believe Capt. Parker collected these papers because they concern schooners. These papers were found in Captain Parker's study with other similar items, and were part of his maritime library which he bequeathed to Maine Maritime Museum.

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on the use of these materials for study or research. Researchers should seek permission to obtain copies, and for publication of any sort.

Physical Condition

These volumes have the usual surface dirt and minor tears of late 19th-century documents. Overall, the S. J. Cooper & Son papers are in good condition.

Biographical/Historical Notes

Samuel J. Cooper was a merchant at Sharptown on the Nanticoke River on Maryland's eastern shore. Sharptown was a very small town (population 651 in 2010) with active shipping and shipbuilding industries. Cooper was born in 1842. At the time these papers document, he was in his mid-60s and doing business with his son Joseph as S. J. Cooper & Son. This firm is first listed as shipowners in the *Record of American & Foreign Shipping* in 1907, and their last listing in the *Record* is 1912. The small tern schooner *Joseph P. Cooper* is the only vessel they are listed as owning, although these papers indicate they had something to do with the ownership of the tern *Alice P. Turner* at about the same time.

Samuel J. Cooper and his wife Rachel had a son Joseph P. and a daughter Lena E. Cooper. He died in 1924.

Joseph P. Cooper, born at Sharptown in September 1875, was the Son of S. L. Cooper & Son. He was in his early 30s at the time these papers were created. He married his wife Margaret at this time, and they had a son Joseph L. (1906) and a son Samuel J. (1910). There is a hint in the papers (reference to "your father" in a letter) that Joseph may have been the more active member of the firm at this time.

He had other ambitions also, and the December 1909 issue of *MotorBoating* magazine ran a notice on page 51: "**Sharptown Yacht Company** has been organized with \$15,000 capital, to build yachts and motor boats at Sharptown,

Md. The company is constructing shops on the wharf of S. J. Cooper & Son, where a large number of hands will be employed. The new company has contracts that will keep it busy for some months to come. B. H. Phillips is president, Jos. P. Cooper, secretary and treasurer.” The 1910 census indicates that Joseph was the manager of the plant. The company seems to have gone out of business after a few years.

The tern or three-mast schooner *Joseph P. Cooper* was built at the Maryland Marine Railway Company at Sharptown, launched in December of 1905. She measured 315 gross tons, 288 net tons, 150.4' length, 28.2' breadth, 10.2' depth of hold. She had a single deck. *List of Merchant Vessels of the United States* indicates a crew of six. Letters from her first captain, John F. Beauchamp, indicate his lack respect for the professional experience of her builders. Her original home port was Sharptown, and managing owners were S. J. Cooper & Son. Captain Beauchamp acquired the schooner from the Coopers about 1913. Later she changed her home port from Sharptown to Wilmington, Delaware (by 1915) and to Mobile, Alabama (1918). She was abandoned at sea with no loss of life on November 29, 1918, at 36°21' N, 71°41' W, in the North Atlantic.

The schooner *Alice P. Turner* was small for a three-master. She measured 192 gross tons, 166 net tons, 127' length, 30.7' breadth, and 9.8' depth of hold. She had a single deck and a crew of four. Originally built in Bellville (NJ) in 1866 as the *Harry Landell*, in 1905 she was re-built at Sharptown to such a degree that she was assigned a new official number along with new signal letters and the new name. Her history under the new name is confusing, even with the little light shed by these papers. She appears to have been home-ported at Crisfield (MD) immediately after rebuilding, owned by Edward S. S. Turner according to the *Record*. But the Mystic Seaport website's listing of Connecticut vessels has her with a home port of New London (CT), and with captains other than the J. L. Bonsall and S. W. Williams who appear in these papers. Later her home port switches to Stonington (CT); sources agree on that, though not the year (1910? 1912?). Her last entry in *List of Merchant Vessels of the U.S.* is 1913. No explanation for her loss or retirement has been found. No official connection with S. J. Cooper & Son has been found, either – they obviously were managing the schooner, from the contents of the papers.

Scope and Content Notes

This is a small amount of documents, even for a small firm like this one, and there are obviously many things missing. There is very little correspondence (no outgoing), no crew accounts, no shipyard accounts, very little in the way of invoices and receipts, and very few cargo records.

Some of the *Joseph P. Cooper* documents make reference to Captain John F. Beauchamp, who commanded the schooner at this time. Some of the *Alice P. Turner* papers refer to Captain J. L. Bonsall or Captain S. W. Williams. The collection as a whole is obviously one that would be accumulated by a shipowner, not one of the captains.

The character of the documents are shown in the following folder list:

Joseph P. Cooper (Three mast schooner)

- 1 Insurance policy, 1907
- 2 Correspondence from Capt. John F. Beauchamp, 1906
- 3 Account summaries: trip statements, 1905-1906
- 4 Statement of general average, 1907 (for 1906 incident)

Alice P. Turner (Three mast schooner)

- 5 Correspondence, 1907
- 6 Account summaries: trip statements, 1907 and undated
- 7 Invoices and receipts, 1907-1908
- 8 Bills of lading, 1907 and undated